

DRAFT RCHCA Spring Meeting Minutes – Silver Creek Middle School – February 18, 2020 DRAFT

RCHCA President Peter Chatfield began the meeting by introducing himself as President, by noting the presence of a quorum, and introducing the other members of the Board. Chatfield noted that Vice President Hill Carter was in Boston and therefore absent. Chatfield pointed out Treasurer John Robinson, who was still collecting dues, and indicated that Betsy and Bill Kingery were retiring as Co-Secretaries. Chatfield asked anyone who was interested in serving as Secretary to volunteer, and noted that the Board was also looking for volunteers for the Nominating Committee.

President Chatfield also indicated that, after many years of service, John Robinson was retiring as Building and Covenants Committee Chair. Chatfield explained that covenants enforcement involved dealing with neighbors when covenants issues came up and, together with the Board, pursuing covenants enforcement where necessary, which was not fun but was important. Chatfield explained that covenants are contractual rights which protect neighborhood property values, and that the Board acted as fiduciaries. The Board's job was also, if and when there are complaints, to evaluate whether there was a violation. Chatfield indicated that not all of the covenants are identical, and that neighbors could find their specific covenants on the RCHCA web site (<https://rchca.org/resources/covenants/>). Chatfield mentioned that things like fences and home improvements need to be reported to the Board for evaluation. Chatfield noted that not all neighborhood complaint issues involved covenant violations, and that Maryland and Montgomery County also had rules that might be applicable.

TREASURER'S REPORT. President Chatfield then called the meeting to order, and introduced Treasurer John Robinson to give the Treasurer's report. Treasurer Robinson noted that RCHCA had cash on hand, including the litigation fund and other savings, of \$7,240. [These figures have been updated to 29 February.] Robinson said that in 2019 RCHCA collected \$6,249 in dues and had \$6,221 in expenses, for net revenue of \$28. Robinson said that one meeting, including sending out the postcard and renting the room, cost around \$2,000; that insurance for the Board and the cost of the accounting program ran about another \$2,000; and that the Spring Fling party cost around \$1,800. The October party has normally cost around \$1,200. Robinson said that in 2019 about 24% of RCHCA households paid dues; but that so far this year only about 60 households out of 640 had paid, which was less than 10%. The cash on hand was enough for administrative expenses, one meeting, and perhaps one or two social events. Robinson said we needed more revenue and more participation; and that a target of 30% of RCHCA households was needed. Robinson said he had cancelled the accounting program he had been using, and would use a spreadsheet instead. Robinson said that without increased revenue, we could end this year with about \$600.

President Chatfield added that, we need to cover expenses. Chatfield said that last year's Halloween party was cancelled due to lack of volunteers. Chatfield stressed that, in addition to covenant enforcement, RCHCA plays an important role in addressing community concerns, including sidewalks, road repairs, the beltway expansion, the school, and things like traffic safety, such as an accident at Saul Road and Connecticut Avenue. Chatfield noted that we needed resources if the neighborhood wanted to have the covenants enforced, and that it has been difficult to fill positions on the Board.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS. President Chatfield asked for a motion to approve the current slate of officers of RCHCA (other than the Kingerys) for re-election, and to authorize the Board to recruit and approve a new Secretary. This motion was made, seconded, and approved by unanimous voice vote. Chatfield then asked for a motion to approve the current (and identical) slate of officers (other than the Kingerys) for re-election to the board of RCH Covenants, Inc., and to authorize the Board to recruit and approve a new Secretary. This motion was made, seconded, and approved by unanimous voice vote. Chatfield said that the new Secretary would serve until his or her election at the 2021 meeting.

COMPOST CREW PRESENTATION. Erica Weiss and a representative from Compost Crew gave a presentation on behalf on Compost Crew (<https://compostcrew.com/>), which collects food and other waste for composting in the green and white buckets that can be seen around the neighborhood on Friday mornings. Methane is a serious greenhouse gas, and the biggest source of methane is food waste in landfills. Composting food waste produces much less methane and produces compost which can be used for soil. Composting is free in Takoma Park and for Chevy Chase residents. The cost is normally \$32/month or \$342/year, but there are enough Kensington participants that the cost is reduced to \$16/month, by using the code "ROCKCREEKCOMPOST." Silver Creek Middle school has started composting, and Compost Crew is working with BCC and North Chevy Chase ES to establish programs there. Compost Crew's process uses higher temperatures and is much more efficient than back-yard composting, and does not attract rats. Compost Crew can accept bones, animal products and paper, other than "waxed" paper, like coffee cups, which in fact use plastic. The green Compost Crew buckets don't smell. Members get a bag of compost back twice a year (if they want it). If members refer a friend, they get a \$10 credit. Compost Crew uses a facility in PG County operated by a third party. Montgomery County composts yard waste, but processes most trash in an incinerator which produces all kinds of nasty harmful chemicals. Ms. Weiss mentioned that our state delegate, Emily Shetty, has introduced legislation to provide state tax credits for composting.

BELTWAY EXPANSION. Barbara Coufal gave a presentation on behalf of Citizens Against Beltway Expansion (CABE, at <https://www.cabe495.com/>). Ms. Coufal noted that she was now the co-chair of CABE. In December, Governor Hogan proposed that Phase 1 of the project include I-270 and the beltway (I-495) from I-270 to the American Legion Bridge. This was approved by the three-member Board of Public Works (BPW) in January after Hogan made a number of promises to secure the vote of State Treasurer Peter Franchot. Hogan promised, inter alia, that there would be no taxpayer funding; that 10% of all tolls would be returned to Montgomery County for transit; that buses could use the toll lanes for free; that MDOT would study transit alternatives; and that all work would be done by union labor. Since January, Hogan has already back-tracked on union labor and on the “no taxpayer dollars” promise.

BPW expects to finish negotiating with developers next spring. The leading candidate is an Australian company, Transurban, which built the toll lanes on I-66 and the Virginia beltway. One of Hogan’s aide’s recently left to work for Transurban. The final contract will have to be voted on by BPW, presumably next spring.

The rest of the beltway was not voted on, but Phase 1, if completed, will increase overall traffic, and may create new choke points in our area, which will lead to more expansion pressure. And for Kensington, studies have already shown that the Phase 1 expansion will lead to increased traffic on Connecticut Ave, in addition to increased construction noise, car noise, and vehicle emissions. The expansion project [Phase 1?] will take 300 acres of parkland, and will require moving Rock Creek at Stoneybrook Drive.

What can be done? Our own 18th state district representative, Emily Shetty, will continue to fight against the project. A bill has been introduced in the MD legislature which would require all P3 projects (like the beltway expansion) to be approved by the General Assembly, rather than just a 3-person board. This bill would not affect Phase 1, but could substantially slow down other, similar projects. Marc Korman from the 16th district (Bethesda, Glen Echo, and Chevy Chase) has introduced a bill which would put BPW’s January promises into law, which could have the effect of reducing the developer’s interest in the project. Other bills, which have less chance of success, would give local counties veto rights over such projects, or would prevent the state from buying out landowners for P3 projects. Coufal believes that the fight is not over, and slowing down the project, for long enough, might even stop it. For example, Rockville owns three bridges over I-270, and may be willing to fight this in court. Transurban may want concessions that BPW member Peter Franchot, who is also running for Governor, will not agree to. For example, in Virginia, Transurban got a contract provision requiring the state to compensate them if the state builds a road which competes with Transurban’s toll roads. An environmental study is due out in May which could provide

ammunition. Carderock may be able to argue that historical lands are being damaged. The Maryland National Parks and Planning Commission (MNPPC) has to agree to give up some parkland and, if MNPPC wants to fight, may be able to argue that eminent domain cannot be used to take *public* property. Coufal said her email was bcoufal10@aol.com, and urged people to join CABE, which sends out a weekly newsletter telling citizens how they can help.

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF LAURA DENNIS. President Chatfield noted that, unfortunately, Laura Dennis was not in attendance, but that she had done a lot of very helpful work cleaning up and getting benches placed along Silver Creek.

UPDATE ON COVENANTS, SIDEWALKS, WATER MAINS, and ROADS. President Chatfield said that no work has been done on the project to remove offensive racial language from covenants, which he had discussed at last year's RCHCA meeting. He said, as he did last year, that covenants can be revised on a "block-by-block" basis. In response to a question, Chatfield said what constitutes a "block" can be determined by looking at the covenants map on the RCHCA web site. Chatfield said one way to get signatures would be to hold a "block party." Chatfield acknowledged that the web site still did not have any form documents for revising covenants. In response to a question, Chatfield agreed that any covenant could be changed, but noted that because you had to get unanimous consent, many covenants might not be easy to change. Chatfield again noted that the web site has step-by-step instructions on how to find your particular block and covenant. <https://rchca.org/resources/covenants/>

Chatfield suggested that it was too early to begin to address sidewalks, because WSSC is still repairing water mains, and the county had previously indicated that it would not start revising traffic, stop sign, and street intersection issues until after WSSC had finished its work. Chatfield said that the Board intended to do a survey after the traffic and intersection issues had been addressed. Chatfield noted that sidewalks could harm trees, and that there were some strong opinions both for and against sidewalks. Chatfield believed that WSSC would be finished at some point in 2021. Neighbors and Chatfield agreed that there had been some communication issues. Secretary Betsy Kingery reported that Mr. Bilgrami who made the presentation on behalf of MDOT last year was no longer working on this project. Several neighbors indicated that WSSC's work and heavy equipment may have affected gas mains in the area, and that the 9900 block of Old Spring Road lost gas service over the holidays. A number of neighbors reported having smelled gas. A neighbor noted that not all streets' water mains were being replaced.

OTHER ISSUES. Carol Miller noted that Montgomery County was still in the process of finalizing school boundaries, and that a number of Kensington neighborhoods could be affected. Chatfield pointed out that RCHCA and Silver Creek Middle School would clearly stay

with BCC. A neighbor mentioned that PEPCO's tree crews had cut down some trees on his street, and there was a discussion about whether the trees crews were being overly aggressive.

The meeting adjourned on time, at 9:00 pm.